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No. 34.

WHAT ARE YOU FIT FOR?

A party of railway workers were busily talking together, when they were joined by a steady, quiet-looking man well known to some of them, but whose visits were not always welcome. Mr. Monck's coming amongst them, however, did not put a stop to the conversation. Jack Bunce was telling his companions something that had happened in the morning, and had caused him much fun and amusement.

"Well," continued he, "as I was saying, you 'll hardly believe it, but that poor, weakly old man applied for work on our line. 'I can do a good day's work with the best of them,' says he, while his limbs tottered so that he could hardly walk up the hill."

"What did the foreman of the works answer him?" asked William Reynolds.

"Why," returned Jack, "he could scarcely keep from laughing, but he spoke kindly enough and said: My good friend, I fear our work is too hard for you; you are not fit to undertake it. The soil is bad about here, and our strongest men are sometimes out of heart; but all he could say the old fellow pressed and pressed to be taken on, till Mr. McNabb lost all patience and bid him be gone, he had other business to attend to, and

turned away; and then the old man walked off, looking quite down and disappointed."

"What an old goose he must be," said Robert Jones, "I've been working on the railway off and on these ten years, but the bit we are now on is the worst I ever tried."

"Why, my bit of a boy, Charles," said Jack, "could do a better day's work than that old man, but *he's* not fit for this tough sort of business, which takes pretty well all my strength."

"Mr. McNabb has had some strange beggars to-day," said William Reynolds, "James Browne has been asking him for a month's wages since he has been laid up!"

"Why," said another man, "he has had his club money, and a help from the line as well, and yet does he ask for all his wages?"

"It's plain," said Jack, "he'll lose nothing for lack of asking, but there don't seem much justice in expecting to be paid wages for work he has never done."

"Certainly not," said Robert Jones, "no work no wages, is as fair as hard work, good wages: both of which we have had the luck to light on just now."

Mr. Monck, who had held his tongue all this while, now turned to Robert Jones and said: "The office of Parish clerk in this parish is vacant, I hear; there is a very fair salary and many chance fees; would it be well for you to apply for it?"

"Thank you, sir," said Robert, scratching his head and looking at Jack, "why, you see, it would be a strange thing for the congregation on Sunday, to see a man get into the clerk's desk, and try to give out a psalm, when he could neither read the verse, nor sing the tune!"

Mr. Monck. "But the salary is good."

Robert. "May be for them as is fit for it; but I am not going to make such a fool of myself as to apply for what I arn't fit for."

Mr. Monck. "William Reynolds, suppose you try for it."

William laughed and said, "I never go to church, and I don't mean to go till I'm carried there. I work hard all the week, and I think I've a right to take a bit of pleasure on Sundays."

Mr. Monck. "Jack Bunce, what do you say?"

Jack. "Do *you* think I'm fit for it?"

Mr. Monck. "As you ask me the question, No; I wish you were."

Jack. "Then what are you after, telling us to go and make fools of ourselves?"

Mr. Monck. "I only advise you to act in this matter in the same way in which you act in matters of much greater importance."

All the men. "What do you mean by that?"

Mr. Monck. "That you are all wise men as regards the affairs of the body, but act like very foolish ones as regards the affairs of the soul. You see plainly enough that no man ought to expect a situation here which he is not fit for, and that it is unjust to expect high wages for little or no work, yet in affairs of the soul you see neither of these truths clearly."

"Say out at once what you mean," said the men.

Mr. Monck. "Let me ask you each one question; where do you expect to go when you die, Robert Jones?"

Robert. "I've as good a right to expect to go to heaven as most men. You know I'm no drunkard: I lay by my earnings, and go to church when I can."

Mr. Monck. "And you, William?"

William. "I don't think much about it, but I'm sure

I'm not so bad as many, though I do spend my Sundays as I choose."

Mr. Monck. "And you, Jack Bunce?"

"Well, really, sir," said Jack, smiling, "you know I'm a pretty good father, and my wife can speak no bad of me; I bring up my family honestly, and do my duty to my neighbor."

Mr. Monck. "Can any of you tell me how long heaven will last?"

Jack. "They say for ever and ever."

Mr. Monck. "Yes, for ever and ever—a word easier, my man, to speak than to think about. I have heard that an old scholar used to say it was the most solemn and the most wonderful word in the whole Bible. And what sort of place is heaven? A place where no sorrow can enter and no tear be shed, where all will be perfectly happy, and where the soul will enjoy bliss greater than you and I can think of, and that for hundreds, thousands, millions of years, and then be no nearer the end of it than it was at the beginning. Robert Jones, you expect to enjoy this never-ending, unspeakable happiness because you are no drunkard, but save your earnings to become a rich man, and sometimes go to church on Sundays, giving two short hours to God once a week, and spending the other one hundred and sixty-six in going after your own ways. William, you expect the same good things because you are no worse than others. Jack, you expect them also because you bring up your family well, and pay your way honestly. Now, I ask you whether, fairly and justly, such work deserves such wages? Suppose you live sixty years, and each day of each year keep from one sin, and do one right thing, would it be just to expect hundreds and thousands and millions of years of

happiness as payment? Do such wages bear the smallest possible fair proportion to such work?"

"That's just like you," said William, "thinking no one will be saved but yourself."

Mr. Monck. "What I think matters very little. I ask you now one simple question. In common honesty, in common justice, *ought* such an amount of work to expect such an amount of wages?"

Jack. "Why, if you put it in that way, I suppose we can't say that it ought."

Mr. Monck. "Then, again, by your own shewing, you look upon that man as a fool here who applies for a situation for which he is utterly unfit."

All. "Of course, we do."

Mr. Monck. "What kind of place is Heaven?"

William. "I don't know, I never was there." The men winked at each other, and laughed.

Mr. Monck. "My friends, God in his great mercy grant we may all one day see that bright and happy place. Death is no laughing matter. Eternity is no laughing matter. Heaven is no laughing matter. Hell, hell is no laughing matter."

The solemn, grave manner in which he spoke sobered them all in spite of themselves.

Mr. Monck continued: "I know if we were placed in heaven as we are now in the sight of God, our flesh would never be able to bear it. We should faint and die at once. If God has ever shown men a small part of his glory even, they have been unable to stand the sight of it without special strength given to them by God. My friends, Heaven is a HOLY place: God is a HOLY God: the saints and angels in heaven are all HOLY. 'Holiness becomes God's house for ever.' Nothing unholy can enter there. It is written in the Bible, 'There shall in *nowise* enter into it anything

that defileth.' And again, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Now, tell me, are you holy? Have you ever prayed to God to give you his Holy Spirit which can alone make you holy? Are you made new in the spirit of your minds? Are heavenly things, are holy things, your delight? God's holy word, his holy day, his holy worship, are these your pleasures? In a word, are you holy? Or are you striving to become so? Are you made fit for heaven? Are you asking God to make you so? Otherwise it is plain and clear that, in hoping and expecting to go to heaven, you are hoping for and expecting a situation for which you are altogether unfit. You are acting as regards the soul, in a manner in which if a man acts as regards earthly things, you look upon him as a fool—a madman. And you judge rightly, it is folly—it is madness to expect wages for work never done, or to expect that the Holy God would give you a place for which you have never tried to become fit."

Jack. "Well, sir, there 's time enough yet to think about such things."

Mr. Monck. "A poor excuse that, Jack. Why, you can't live on a railway and not see that a man has not a minute that he can call his own. You all remember John Walker. Poor lad! he was not twenty years old. I passed him on Friday and heard him with an oath say he wished he was dead, and on the Monday after he was a corpse. He was driving the tip-horse, failed in slipping quickly enough out of the way, and before he had time to say one prayer, was caught by the iron wheel of the cart and crushed to death."

All the men. "May be, sir, death might do something for the poor fellow."

Mr. Monck. "No, my friends, no. Death is no conjuror. It just takes a man out of one place and puts

him into another without making a bad man's heart better, or his tastes holier; as he leaves this world, so he enters the next. Just what a man sows here, he reaps there. As well might the sailor try to swim across the ocean on a straw, as a man who has lived and died unholy to cross to the regions of happiness and sinlessness above. And now, one word more to you all and I will say good morning. Eternal life is not to be earned as wages for work done. It is the gift of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. He has earned it for all who will come to him for it, desiring to lay down their sins at his feet. No efforts of our own can make us fit for heaven, but God has promised the help of his Holy Spirit to all who ask it. If I am saved, it will be by God's mercy and goodness alone. If YOU are saved, you must owe it to the same mercy and goodness. That mercy and goodness flows to a man through Christ, and through Christ only. Unless you receive it through him, and on his own terms, you will never have it at all. Come, then, to Jesus. He is willing to wash you in his blood and clothe you with his righteousness. He is ready to make your heart and life holy by his Spirit He is able to make you fit to dwell with him in heaven. He will give his best gifts to all who humbly and earnestly ask. 'Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'"

Ye dying sons of men,
Immerged in sin and woe,
The gospel's voice attend,
While Jesus sends to you:
Ye perishing and guilty, come;
In Jesus' arms there yet is room.

No longer now delay,
Nor vain excuses frame:
He bids you come to-day,
Though poor, and blind, and lame:
All things are ready, sinner, come;
For every trembling soul there 's room.

Believe the heavenly word
His messenger's proclaim;
He is a gracious Lord,
And faithful is his name:
Backsliding souls, return and come;
Cast off despair, there yet is room.

Compelled by bleeding love,
Ye wandering souls draw near,
Christ calls you from above,
His charming accents hear!
Let whosoever will, now come:
In mercy's breast there still is room.

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